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ABSTRACT

Noting that firearms outnumber children by a margin of almost three to one in the United States, this report advocates gun safety policies to protect children. The report provides information on trends in youth firearm deaths from 1994 and 1999 and comparisons of U.S. data to those of other industrialized countries. A table delineates 1996-1998 statistics on firearm deaths of children and teens ages 0-19 for each state and nationwide, differentiating deaths due to homicide, suicide, accident, and unknown intent. Additional tables provide information on firearm deaths by age and race, and on firearm deaths from 1979 to 1998. The report argues that national legislation is needed to: (1) register all firearms and license all gun owners; (2) encourage safe storage laws and mandatory trigger locks; (3) apply consumer safety standards to the gun industry; and limit handgun purchases to one a month. In addition, the report presents findings of a recent poll indicating that 90 percent of American high school students support key gun safety proposals. (Contains 15 references.) (KB)

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PROTECT CHILDREN . . . INSTEAD OF GUNS 2000

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The latest data released in 2000 show that in a single year 3,761 children and teens were killed by gunfire in the United States — that's one child almost every two and a half hours, 10 children every day, more than 70 children every week. Between 1979 and 1998, gunfire killed nearly 84,000 children and teens in America — 36,000 more than the total number of American soldiers killed in battle in Vietnam. In the United States, firearms outnumber children by a margin of almost three to one. It's time to stop protecting the approximately 200 million firearms in our country and start protecting the nearly 75 million American children and teens under age 19. It's time for a REAL gun safety policy in America. It's time to protect children instead of guns.

The latest deadly facts about children and gun violence in a single year show:

- 3,761 children and teens were killed by gunfire
- 2,185 were murdered by gunfire
- 1,241 committed suicide with a firearm
- 262 died from an accidental shooting
- 609 were under age 15
- 179 were under age 10
- 83 were under age 5
- Nearly three times as many children under 10 died from gunfire as the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty
- More children and teens died from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined

Other data show:

- Children are twice as likely as adults to be victims of violent crime and more likely to be killed by adults than by other children
- 61 percent of the nearly 84,000 youths killed by gunfire between 1979 and 1998 were White; 36 percent were Black.
- Black children and teens are more likely than Whites to be victims of firearm homicide, while White children and teens are more likely than Black children to use a firearm to take their own life.
- Male adolescents are six times more likely than female adolescents to commit suicide with a firearm.
- Although White youths commit suicide more often than Black youths, the suicide rate for young Blacks has increased by 75 percent since 1980, according to a report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Firearm suicides accounted for 96 percent of the increase in Black youth suicide between 1980 and 1995.
- Homicide is the third leading cause of death among all children ages 5 to 14 and the leading cause of death among Black youths ages 15 to 24.

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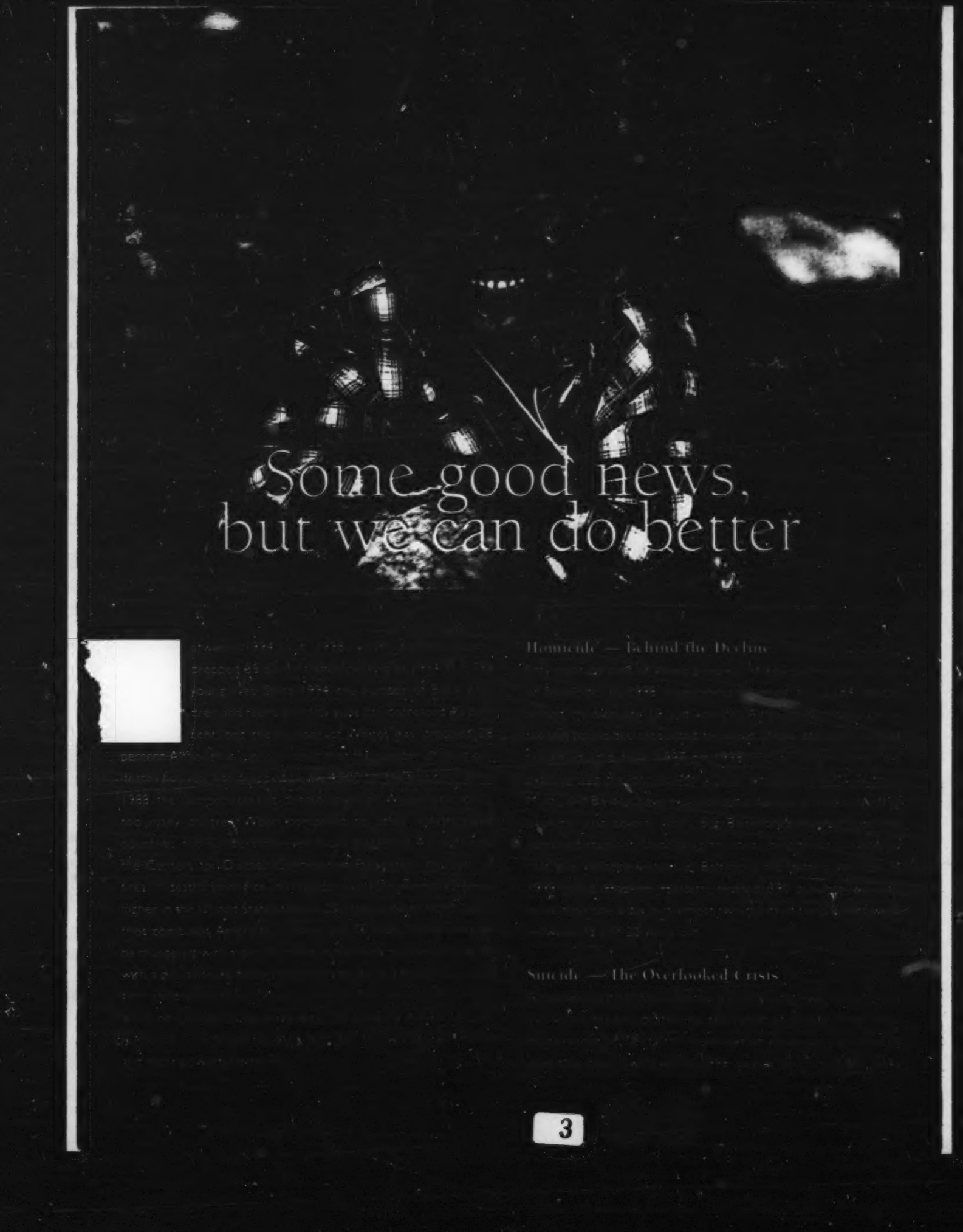
Some good news,
but we can do better

AMERICA NEEDS A REAL POLICY ON GUN SAFETY

Accidental Deaths — The Easiest Tragedy to Prevent

Register all firearms and license all gun owners

Firearm deaths of children and teens, by age, race, and manner, 1998*

Age	All firearm deaths			Homicide			Suicide			Accident			Unknown Intent		
	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black
Under 1	5	4	1	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-4	78	45	30	58	32	24	0	0	0	19	12	6	1	1	0
5-9	96	65	25	60	46	11	1	0	1	34	19	12	1	0	1
10-14	430	309	97	191	110	68	153	131	14	68	53	12	18	15	3
15-19	3,152	1,774	1,263	1,870	732	1,075	1,087	907	131	141	102	38	54	33	19
Total	**3,761**	**2,197**	**1,416**	**2,184**	**924**	**1,179**	**1,241**	**1,038**	**146**	**262**	**186**	**68**	**74**	**49**	**23**

*Data are for persons ages 0-19. The figures for All races include races other than White and Black. Separate tabulations for these other races are not available from NCHS's unpublished tabulations.
Source: National Center for Health Statistics. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund

Firearm deaths, by manner, persons ages 0-19, 1979-1998 (excludes legal intervention)

	Total	Homicide	Suicide	Accident	Unknown Intent
1979	3,710	1,651	1,220	726	113
1980	3,749	1,745	1,214	699	101
1981	3,589	1,660	1,213	604	112
1982	3,332	1,498	1,207	550	77
1983	2,962	1,228	1,150	504	70
1984	3,030	1,289	1,114	532	75
1985	3,169	1,322	1,256	519	72
1986	3,349	1,513	1,293	472	71
1987	3,430	1,573	1,281	467	79
1988	3,474	1,953	1,387	543	91
1989	4,384	2,367	1,580	367	70
1990	4,935	2,852	1,476	541	66
1991	5,329	3,247	1,436	531	95
1992	5,353	3,336	1,426	501	90
1993	5,715	3,625	1,469	526	104
1994	5,793	3,579	1,565	512	137
1995	5,254	3,249	1,450	440	115
1996	4,613	2,836	1,309	376	92
1997	4,205	2,562	1,262	306	75
1998	3,761	2,184	1,241	262	74
Total	**83,606**	**45,277**	**26,340**	**10,208**	**1,781**

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Vital Statistics, Table 292 (unpublished). Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

Encourage safe storage laws and mandatory trigger locks

Apply consumer safety standards to the gun industry

Limit handgun purchases to one a month

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD
Tell your elected officials to get REAL
and support a gun safety policy to
PROTECT CHILDREN INSTEAD OF GUNS

Firearm deaths of children and teens ages 0-19, by manner, 1996-1998

	Total*			Homicide*			Suicide			Accident			Unknown Intent		
	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
Alabama	104	93	86	59	57	47	25	23	24	14	10	11	6	3	4
Alaska	22	23	16	6	9	3	12	10	10	4	2	3	0	2	0
Arizona	120	117	102	64	53	49	47	52	43	4	5	6	5	7	4
Arkansas	63	55	69	27	28	36	26	18	24	9	7	3	1	2	6
California	672	594	493	508	457	372	108	106	102	52	26	13	4	5	6
Colorado	43	57	60	15	22	29	23	31	26	4	4	4	1	0	1
Connecticut	36	21	23	29	17	15	6	4	6	1	0	2	0	0	0
Delaware	5	7	2	4	2	2	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
District of Columbia	62	65	30	59	59	27	1	4	3	0	1	0	2	1	0
Florida	190	165	154	116	108	80	57	44	65	12	12	8	5	1	1
Georgia	160	129	111	79	70	61	51	35	39	24	20	10	6	4	1
Hawaii	3	3	4	2	2	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	27	26	27	11	2	3	11	21	18	4	3	5	1	0	1
Illinois	308	254	264	263	211	206	33	29	40	7	10	13	5	4	5
Indiana	98	79	92	55	47	57	30	21	27	8	8	7	5	3	1
Iowa	22	33	26	8	8	6	13	20	15	0	3	5	1	2	0
Kansas	53	53	54	24	28	28	22	17	22	7	7	3	0	1	1
Kentucky	52	57	44	23	34	17	20	16	23	9	7	3	0	0	1
Louisiana	192	154	124	133	98	74	43	39	35	15	15	15	1	2	0
Maine	5	13	10	1	3	2	4	10	7	0	0	1	0	0	0
Maryland	106	104	108	88	91	89	13	11	13	3	2	2	2	0	4
Massachusetts	32	24	28	26	17	19	5	6	8	0	0	1	1	1	0
Michigan	157	156	135	96	103	87	42	41	43	13	10	3	6	2	2
Minnesota	56	55	34	25	26	12	21	25	22	6	4	0	4	0	0
Mississippi	77	81	55	38	41	28	19	28	19	18	11	7	2	1	1
Missouri	101	97	89	63	48	52	33	34	32	5	13	4	0	2	1
Montana	20	16	17	4	4	3	12	8	12	3	3	2	1	1	0
Nebraska	28	26	30	8	12	13	17	13	15	3	1	2	0	0	0
Nevada	36	34	48	25	21	26	8	13	20	3	0	1	0	0	1
New Hampshire	7	2	9	1	1	0	6	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	66	53	49	55	43	35	6	7	13	4	3	1	1	0	0
New Mexico	43	40	47	22	22	25	17	14	14	2	3	8	2	1	0
New York	199	146	123	150	107	88	43	33	28	6	4	5	0	2	2
North Carolina	135	92	88	70	45	43	49	37	30	15	9	13	1	1	2
North Dakota	9	8	7	0	0	2	8	8	4	1	0	1	0	0	0
Ohio	126	95	100	75	49	48	31	36	41	17	8	11	3	2	0
Oklahoma	61	82	61	30	48	22	25	29	30	5	3	6	1	2	3
Oregon	39	38	30	9	13	10	24	19	13	6	3	4	0	3	3
Pennsylvania	181	167	123	113	108	79	59	49	34	4	9	4	5	1	6
Rhode Island	6	4	5	5	2	4	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	78	54	60	39	32	30	27	16	23	9	5	7	3	1	0
South Dakota	10	12	12	1	0	2	9	7	9	0	5	1	0	0	0
Tennessee	123	117	109	66	64	53	32	37	38	23	12	16	2	4	2
Texas	359	377	322	202	194	176	121	139	108	27	39	29	9	5	9
Utah	37	35	32	11	10	12	24	24	19	0	0	1	2	1	0
Vermont	5	4	5	1	2	0	2	1	5	1	0	0	1	1	0
Virginia	109	114	97	54	68	46	43	39	39	12	5	9	0	2	3
Washington	67	83	66	31	35	28	31	36	32	4	8	5	1	4	1
West Virginia	16	23	19	6	9	5	8	10	12	2	3	1	0	1	1
Wisconsin	76	58	53	35	31	30	32	26	18	8	1	5	1	0	0
Wyoming	11	10	9	1	1	1	7	7	6	2	2	1	1	0	1
United States	**4,613**	**4,205**	**3,761**	**2,836**	**2,562**	**2,184**	**1,309**	**1,262**	**1,241**	**376**	**306**	**262**	**92**	**75**	**74**

*Total firearm deaths and homicide firearm deaths exclude firearm deaths by legal (police or corrections) intervention and deaths by air rifles.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table III, Deaths from 282 selected causes. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

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America's young people want a REAL policy to protect children instead of guns

A recent poll by Hamilton College found that 9 out of 10 American high school students support key gun safety proposals. The study also found that while students believe that the Constitution protects the right of citizens to own guns, it does not prohibit government regulation of handgun sale and use.

- 96 percent support the registration of all handguns
- 90 percent support the licensing of handgun owners
- 87 percent support trigger lock requirements
- 78 percent support CAP laws
- 65 percent believe that laws governing the sale of firearms should be made more strict

References

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